A Look Back

AS A LOOK BACK IN TIME FOR OUR READERS, we here present an amazing saga of the sea: "*Captain Benson's Own Story*" which provides an early glimpse of Easter Island as it appeared to a shipwrecked crew in 1913. Following *Captain Benson's Own Story*, we include an excerpt from another obscure little book by Frederick O'Brien, *Mystic Isles of the South Pacific*, published in 1921 by Star Books, New York. As it happened, O'Brien was in Tahiti when Benson and two crew members arrived via rowboat to the harbor at Pape'ete. His colorful story adds a bit of depth to the *Log of the El Dorado*.

We know little about the author, N. P. Benson, not even his full name. That he must have had considerable experience at sea is evident from comments made in O'Brien's story, as well as hints dropped by the Captain himself. If any of our readers can provide any information on Benson or his crew, we'd be delighted. Thus begins the story of survival against the odds.

Captain Benson's Own Story
The Log of the *El Dorado*
by Captain N. P. Benson

The James H. Barry Company, San Francisco (1914)

INTRODUCTION

In the hope that this little tale, written by one who has followed the sea for more than thirty years, will justify its appearance even between paper covers and enable you to steal an hour from the carking cares of life while, from the disintegrating hulk of my late command, the lumber schooner El Dorado, you voyage with my crew and myself across nine hundred miles of storm-tossed ocean in a twenty-two foot boat, through misery and suffering such as few men will ever be called upon to endure and live, I present it as a plain, salt-water yarn. If any apology is due the public from one who thus dares to wield a pen in a hand calloused by long and intimate association with rope-end and marlinespike, I make it freely and crave your indulgence for this affliction on the broad general grounds that I am an old salt whom nobody humors—and hence I must humor myself!

Since that far-distant day when the first real navigator left the blue coastline astern and dared the trackless trails of "old Ocean's gray and melancholy waste," in the breast of every landsman there has abided, at some period of his life, a lively interest in the adventures of the men who go down to the sea in ships. Strange, indeed, is that individual who has not known the blue-water fever, the yearning to sail to distant lands, to sniff the aroma of spice-laden islands wafted to him on vagrant tropic breezes, to revel in the picturesque charms and undying romance of the wide, blue vistas of the sea and the lands that lie beyond. YOU, brother, have doubtless FELT that call of Father Neptune, but have never heard it; therefore, to you my landsman friend, tethered to the beach by the bonds of home and family, fame and finance, this simple, unvarnished tale of my Great Adventure is dedicated.

I make no claim to literary prowess. I merely spin a yarn of the battle with the Sea. The story here produced was first published in The Saturday Evening Post, under date of August 15th, 1914. Owing to the curtailment of space in that magazine, however, the story was greatly condensed. In the pleasant anticipation that a longer and more detailed story will have a wider and more potent appeal to my readers, particularly since it is a chronicle of actual events, I offer my yarn for what I think it is worth—a pleasant hour to you and 25 cents to me!

THE AUTHOR, San Francisco, January 1, 1915

THE LOG OF THE EL DORADO

I am a lucky man. I have lost my ship and her cargo, but I have saved all hands and my ticket. My nerves are as steady as they were but my hair is white—and when the tug snaked the schooner El Dorado, my late command, out across Columbia river bar and cast off, I was the proprietor of just sufficient iron-gray hair around the temples to indicate the fact that I was beating up into the rolling forties. I have been a sailor since early boyhood and this white thatch is a relic of my Great Adventure; at least my friends ashore call it that, although from my point of view I merely took the hazard of the sea and won because I was lucky and a fairly good seaman. And this sudden rush of white to my head is not the result of fright. I have made the discovery that mental suffering does not accompany physical distress.

This isn't a fiction story. It's just a little travelogue, rewritten from my log as master of the schooner El Dorado, and later of the El Dorado's lifeboat. A friend of mine, a writing man, said it had charm and the romance and adventure of the sea, which makes me smile, but he insisted, so here is the yarn.

The El Dorado was a big four-masted lumber schooner running mostly in the off-shore trade. On the afternoon of March 31st, 1913, we finished loading at Astoria, Oregon, with a cargo of rough fir lumber for discharge at Antofagasta, Chile, and with my mates and the longshoremen I got the deckload lashed. After taking on water and supplies we lay at the dock until the following morning, when a crimp herded my crew down to the mill wharf. They had all been signed for the voyage before the Deputy Shipping Commissioner and had their baggage with them.

I said baggage. That is what they had. If they had been sailors they would have had bags, and signing on for the dark blue they should have come aboard howling drunk—instead of which they came sober. I didn't like the looks of things and neither did my mate, Mr. Wilson. "They're a bad lot," he said. "Not a sailor in the outfit."

Well, there aren't many more sailors left, anyhow. They're all North Pacific laborers now, and prefer to run coastwise in the steam schooners, where the pay is fifty dollars a month, with little to do between ports, two voyages and sometimes three a month, with pay-day at the end of every voyage and a few nights a month in port. We skippers in the big wind-jammers running off-shore must be content with what we can get these days, and even the scrapings of the ports come high. The crimp herded eight green hands over the deckload to the fo'castle and charged me the price of eight A. B's. What could I do? I took them.

I was fortunate otherwise for I had two bully mates and the El Dorado was a schooner. As everybody knows, all the plain sail on a schooner can be hoisted and furled from deck. Had the El Dorado been a square-rigger, thus necessitating the sending

of men aloft, I should have the sin of murder on my soul this very minute.

"We'll teach 'em to steer and manage to make out somehow," said Mr. Wilson hopefully, so he counted off the watches, the second mate took the wheel, while Mr. Wilson went forward to receive the line from the tug and fasten it on the bitts, and half an hour later we went out with the ebb. The tug towed us half way down to the lightship and cast off, and Mr. Wilson came aft to report half the crew seasick after crossing the bar, from which you will see that there was a jinks on us from the very start of the voyage.

I have never been a superstitious sailor, but I couldn't help reflecting that we had sailed on Friday!

We were scarcely clear of the lightship before we encountered bad weather. However, a sufficient number of our alleged crew managed to keep their sea-legs, and between the mates and myself we ramped along with nothing worth mentioning in the log. We taught our men to steer and by the time we were well down into the South Pacific and had passed through the south-east trades they had acquired some slight knowledge of their duties.

Now, in order that the non-sailors who may read this story will understand why the El Dorado happened to be twenty-seven hundred miles off the coast of Chile on the morning of June 11th, I will explain. In sailing from Astoria, Oregon, to Antofagasta, Chile, one describes a huge semicircle off shore until he has run out of the south-east trades, when he comes about and with westerly winds at his tail make his run in a course almost due north-east, to his port of discharge.

On the morning of June 11th the sky became overcast. It did not cloud up; just became one solid wall of darkness. A strong breeze commenced blowing out of the south-east and the barometer fell rapidly; the sea was running unusually high. The wind increased steadily in violence until by noon I was forced to take in and make fast the tops'ls and spanker.

Toward evening the wind increased in squalls varying from south-east to east-south-east. It continued to increase slowly during the night and by daylight of the 12th a terrific sea was running. The big schooner was laboring heavily and I sent the first mate below to sound the well. He reported the El Dorado making little water and I put a couple of men at the pumps.

By noon of the twelfth the wind had hauled around into the north-east and was blowing a gale. The sea increased in violence and the schooner commenced to leak more and more. She was straining and opening her seams. And the watch on deck stayed at the pumps continuously. During the afternoon the gale increased so I ordered all hands on deck to shorten down.

We fell to on the mainsail, which blew away like a feather as we were about to take it in, so we were spared the trouble. We finally hove to with double-reefed foresail, mizzen and spanker.

At 8 P.M. on the 12th the seas were miniature mountains, and the water was gaining steadily in the hold, although both steam and hand pumps were going steadily. By 9 o'clock there was five feet of water in the hold, and it was so dark one could not see a man standing alongside of him. Every little while an unusually big sea would grip the vessel, shake her as a terrier shakes a rat and heave her over on her beam ends. We were on the port tack now, and presently, under this treatment the starboard side of the deckload commenced to shift. It was only a question of time unit it tore loose from the lashings and went by the board. I examined it and found it had shifted about eight inches to starboard, while the starboard side of the poop deck was separating from the poop rail, thus letting in streams of water which were filling the vessel rapidly. When I went to my cabin I found nearly everything ruined by water.

I thought it over and decided to wear around, as the vessel had a very heavy starboard list. This relieved her, but the relief was merely temporary, for there was no escaping those big seas. They were soon up to their old sport of throwing the El Dorado on her beam ends again, until presently the deckload shifted over to port, doing the same damage on that side that had already been accomplished to starboard. It wasn't very pleasant, that knowledge that we were being systematically torn to pieces.

By midnight it was no longer blowing a gale. It was a hurricane, lashing the ocean into a smother of white foam that gleamed through the inky darkness. Mr. Wilson, the first mate, was with me on the poop deck, when the second mate came up out of the well with the watch. They had been driven out. The water was up to their shoulders, so we knew then that we were doomed. Of course the steam pump was still at work, but while it retarded it could not prevent the schooner from becoming waterlogged.

Seeing that there was nothing to be gained by lying hove to, and that the schooner was certain to be mauled to pieces, I decided to run before it. All hands fell to on the spanker and mizzen, and took them in; then with a wisp of the foresail set we scudded before it. This seemed to relieve her vessel considerably, although as she was very low in the water the seas broke over her continuously. However, as I had taken the precaution to string life lines not a man of the crew was washed overboard.

We could only wait patiently for daylight—not, however, that we saw any hope for either vessel or crew unless the hurricane abated, but rather, I think because it seemed easier to die in daylight. I didn't think much about death at the time, because I had so many other things to think of, but I was pretty well depressed because it was so dark and I couldn't see to make a fight.

About four in the morning of the 13th our Jap cook managed to serve coffee and sandwiches. How he managed this is a mystery wrapped in his Oriental soul, for I didn't think there was anything dry or warm on that ship. A skipper seldom gets demonstrative with his Japanese cook, but I shall think lovingly of this fellow for many a year to come. A Chinaman would have gone to pieces and prayed to his heathen gods, leaving us to starve.

That meager breakfast was the last meal aboard the El Dorado. We were all very fagged and sleepy when daylight finally came, and with its coming hope departed. But we were pretty tired. I do not recall that we cared very much.

That day was Friday, the 13th day of June, 1913. Of course I'm not superstitious, but I couldn't help think of it as I ordered the crew to commence to jettison the deckload. I had to lighten her. We went at it and worked like fiends for a couple of hours and then the water came into the galley and the donkey-room

and put out the fire under the donkey-engine and stopped the steam pumps. We were absolutely helpless. I was disgusted. The hold commenced to fill rapidly.

I have been a sailor for thirty years, but never before had I seen such a terrific sea. It was just one boiling smother of foam as far as we could see, and to attempt to launch a boat, much less expect it to survive an instant in that smother, would have been sheer idiocy. I remember when I was a cabin boy in the ship W. H. Lincoln we encountered a typhoon in Yokohama harbor. The old salts who went through that typhoon still speak of it, but it was just a capful of wind compared to that South Pacific hurricane that was smashing the poor old El Dorado to pieces.

About eleven o'clock, to our great relief, the wind commenced to moderate and the sun came out. By noon the wind and sea had both abated considerably, and after a consultation with my mates, I decided to abandon the ship.

I ordered the life boat made ready and slung in the spanker throat halyards. This was quickly done, for we had little time and the cabin was liable to be flooded at any moment. While the mates and crew were busy getting their things into the boat I ran below, grabbed the ship's medicine chest, emptied its contents out on the cabin floor and put into it my sextant, navigation books and charts and the ship's papers.

I rushed on deck, put this chest in the lifeboat and ran below again to the cabin, where I seized some clothing, blankets and oilskins. These I placed in the boat also. We now had in the boat all we required except provisions, and were trying desperately to get them out of the cabin and galley before the bulkhead should collapse and flood them. When the vessel rose on a sea and the great body of water in her rushed aft the pressure was terrific, and while we were grubbing around the worst happened. The vessel rose on a particularly high sea, the water rushed aft and the bulkhead went with a smash.

I got out of that deathtrap with a case of corned beef and a box of soda crackers. I had intended to take the ship's chronometer also, but in the rush to get out before I should be drowned, I had to abandon it. If that bulkhead had only held about fifteen seconds longer we would have been all right. As I climbed up the companion with my priceless box of soda crackers under one arm and the case of corned been under the other, I remember thinking to myself: "Now, how in the devil am I going to figure out my position in longitude without a chronometer?"

We were in an awful predicament. I'm a Scandinavian, and our kind of people have the reputation of being slow thinkers, but if anybody thinks I didn't realize instantly that not only had we been washed into a bad hole but that we had dragged the hole in after us, then he's libeling the only source of supply for real sailors.

Mr. Wilson helped me out of the companionway. He is an American. He observed the loss of the chronometer and said something. He said it to himself, you bet, but it was derogatory to me, I know. I could see it in his eyes. Perhaps I felt guilty, for I should have brought out the chronometer in the medicine chest, but confound it, a man can't think of everything when his ship's breaking up under him, can he?

"We're twenty-seven hundred miles off the Chilean coast," said Mr. Wilson acidly.

If he wasn't a smashing good mate I'd have thrown the box of corned beef at him. I was going to exercise my privilege as a skipper to tell him something for the good of his immortal soul, when I happened to glance at that green crew of mine.

Poor devils. Life on the ocean wave was a new wrinkle with them, and they were not happy, although I will say this for them. They kept their heads and obeyed orders implicitly, and were as game a lot of green hands as ever spliced the main brace. They were standing by now, ready to launch the lifeboat. Most of them had no coats, some of them had lost their sou'westers, others had no shoes.

There was practically no food in the boat, but plenty of water, and to enter the ship's cabin again was impossible. But still I had one last chance for provisions. I had, in the after companion leading down to the cabin, a little locker where I kept certain kinds of canned goods, and it occurred to me that by descending into the cabin as far as possible, and standing on the companion I might reach the locker and open it.

This I was enabled to do. In the locker we found thirty-eight cans of soup, thirty-two cans of condensed milk, four cans of jam and three cans of lunch tongue. This, with one case of corned beef (twelve 1-lb tins) and the box of soda crackers constituted the provisions for eleven hungry men on a voyage of thousands of miles in a twenty-two foot lifeboat in the teeth of a hurricane.

Lifeboat of the *El Dorado*. It appears that this was taken after Captain Benson and two others reached Tahiti.

By the time we had got this latest treasure into the boat the seas had commenced to do terrible damage on deck. The schooner's small boat had been washed away earlier in the day and the sea for a mile around us was strewn with lumber. Doors and skylights and part of the poop rail had been washed away and the vessel was breaking up very rapidly.

The great and most important task before us now was to get the lifeboat overside safely. Upon this depended everything. I know hundreds of sailors who, as disinterested onlookers, would have wagered the earnings of a voyage that we cold not succeed. I didn't believe we could succeed myself, but when your ship is going to pieces under you, you'll try anything once. The sea was still running very high, but somehow I felt that if I managed right I'd have at least a fighting chance.

The boat was slung in the spanker throat halyard over on the port side, ready for lowering away. I ordered Mr. Wilson and Mr. Johansen, the second mate, into the boat and had the crew stand by to lower away the instant I should give the word. I then climbed up on the wheel box and watched the sea for a brief smooth spell.

Presently I saw a chance. It would probably be twenty seconds before another sea would sweep the vessel, and I yelled to the crew to lower away. They obeyed instantly and let go the tackle; Wilson and Johansen shoved the boat away from the vessel and got in two good powerful strokes of their oars before the sea reached them. At the same time two men gave a vigorous pull on the boat's painter from aft, and she shot toward the ship's stern. As she passed she was almost upset by the big overhanging stern of the schooner settling in the water, and pressing her down, but Wilson shoved her clear with his oar and the only damage done was the loss of his other oar. They floated here, off the stern, holding her head up to the sea, and the rest of us proceeded to get aboard.

Doing this was far simpler than it appears to a landsman. Her huge spanker boom overhung the El Dorado's stern fully eighteen feet, so I crawled out to the end o the spanker boom and made the end of a long rope fast there. Then I crawled back and one by one the members of the crew crawled out and down the rope into the lifeboat waiting to receive them. It was a dangerous job, owing to the extreme difficulty in holding the boat in position to receive the passenger. When one let go the rope and dropped it was even money whether he would drop into the boat or the sea. Several did drop into the water, but luckily were grasped immediately and hauled into the boat.

I believe I made the prettiest boarding of all, although far be it from me to brag. I watched my opportunity, since I was the last man to leave the ship, and as the lifeboat, rolling and pitching frightfully, hung directly under me for an instant, I shot down the line and landed fairly in the stern-sheets—my proper position, by the way. The mate shouted to the crew to give way, and thus we abandoned the El Dorado. As we pulled clear of the vessel we could see pieces of black timber torn from her vitals, floating among the lumber from her deckload.

It was exactly four P.M. of Friday, June 13th, 1913, when we pulled away from the El Dorado. It required some care to avoid having our frail lifeboat staved in by the floating timbers, but we managed to clear this menace successfully. Our position at the time was approximately latitude 31—2 south, longitude 131—27 west. The little boat—she was only twenty-two feet long, with a beam of five and a half feet and three feet deep—was setting very low in the water, for she had eleven men aboard her. She had between ten and twelve inches free board, which is hardly enough in a hurricane.

I have said that with the exception of the two mates and myself the members of the crew were all green hands. Until the hurricane had borne down upon us, the lack of experience in our crew had worked no particular hardship. As the Scriptures have it: "Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed." No skipper leaving Columbia river ports in April for a voyage to the West Coast need expect a crew worth while, f or sailors at that time of the year are very scarce. They go north to the Alaska fisheries for the seasons. However, a man is a man to those that deal in sailors. Fit or unfit, the blood money is just the same, and if a skipper doesn't like the man the crimp sends him, he has the privilege of sending them back—and lying idle in the stream until his owners fire him. I took what I could get and made the best of it—and now, in that twenty-two foot lifeboat, tossing from crest to crest of those huge seas, I cursed that crimp to the deepest hells—and made the best of it.

Of the seven men before the mast but one could be trusted to steer the El Dorado when we left port, and if you think a crew like this isn't a great handicap handling a lifeboat in a hurricane, try it some time and find out for yourself. They were good lads and did their best, but that wasn't much from the viewpoint of a real sailor. The mates and I were at home, for the sea was our mistress; she had called to us for a lifetime, and for some reason or other your seasoned sailor never quits while he has his head above water.

But my green hands were dejected. They were facing death and facing it bravely, but there wasn't a face that didn't shine sickly green, and not a grin in the lot. The mates and I tried to cheer them up. I remember feeling a little contemptuous of their lack of response when I announced that we would land at Easter Island, approximately nine hundred miles away; that we would make it in eight or nine days at the lastest. But somehow they couldn't get our point of view, and I couldn't get theirs until happened to remember about that lost chronometer. Then I got their viewpoint in a hurry. Providentially I was an old sailor or I should, without doubt, have gotten sick at the stomach.

The last we saw of the El Dorado her decks were awash to the rail, with mighty little of the rail left, and she was rolling and wallowing frightfully. Her spars were still standing.

Before dark I held a consultation with the mates to ascertain our position. We agreed that we were about twenty-seven hundred miles off the coast of Chile, with Pitcairn's Island about five hundred and sixty miles distant in a north-west direction. However, as westerly winds were now prevailing and it was mid-winter in the South Pacific and stormy in consequence, we had to abandon any attempt to reach Pitcairn's Island as impracticable.

By consulting our charts we found that Easter Island was our only hope. It lay about seven hundred miles to the northeast by east as the crow flies. But as we had no chronometer, my sextant being our sole navigating instrument, I saw that I must take no risks, but must run out the latitude first, in consequence of which the run to Easter Island would be, approximately, nine hundred miles. I would have bet the devil and my immortal soul we wouldn't last nine!

That was a hard night. For some reason, not yet clear to me, we survived it. There was still a very heavy sea running, and it was as black as the interior of a coal mine, and this was our second night without sleep. We were cold and hungry and sleepy, and the salt spray swept over us repeatedly. With the force of the wind behind it that spray stung like the lash of a whip.

But we dared not go to sleep. We had to stay awake—ah, what a job it was—and handle the boat. That was up to the two mates and myself, for the crew was helpless. Most of it was

seasick. During the night it rained very hard. We had to do a lot of bailing.

The fourteenth of June finally arrived. I remember it was my birthday, and for some fool reason I felt within me the stirring of a bulldog desire to have at least one more birthday! I told Mr. Wilson about it, and he said there was really no reason why I shouldn't feel that way about it. We talked to Mr. Johansen and fixed it up among ourselves that whenever one should see the other falling asleep he should forthwith kick him until he woke up. This is a privilege I do not usually allow my mates but under the circumstances I made no protest. Mr. Wilson said God helped those that helped themselves, and this is one of the most practical saying that I know of, so since I saw that I had pair of mates of whom any skipper might be proud, we decided to help ourselves and get a rag on her.

We stepped the mast and bent our spreadsail and jib. Those sails had belonged to our smaller boat, but they were excellent for present purposes, for the moment the wind filled them we were off at a great rate, skipping along on a course north by east, with the wind from the south-east and squally, with a gradual increase.

I had had many years of experience sailing small boats, and I found that experience invaluable now. Wilson and Johansen were also fairly good boatmen, and I saw that we should manage, although there were many things to be considered, such as gales and lack of sleep. By the way the little boat was flying long I could see that with a fair wind we would make over a hundred miles in twenty-four hours. She was of whaleboat pattern, a good seaboat and fast.

About noon on the 14th I judged it was about time to have something to eat. We had to be extremely economical. My birthday dinner consisted of one-eleventh interest in a one-pound can of corned beef, and two cans of soup mixed with water—about enough to make one cupful for each man. This with two soda crackers each, was pretty light rations, but you have no idea what life it put into us.

All afternoon we scudded along. The wind was strong from the south-west with occasional squalls, but we weathered them nicely. The crew lay huddled in the bottom of the boat under the blankets. I suppose they slept despite the constant salt spray that drenched them. However, with the frequency of squalls it became necessary to have part of the crew constantly at their posts, so I placed one man to handle the sail and two men to stand by with buckets to bail if necessary. The mates and I took turns at the tiller.

Got through the night safely, steering by instinct, for we had no matches and there was no moonlight to see the compass. On the 15th I got my first observation since we took to the lifeboat, and discovered we were in latitude 29-49 south. Wind strong from south-west with frequent, heavy squalls, thunder and lightning. At 3 P.M. wind increased to a gale and we ran dead before it, with a very small part of the mainsail set.

At 10 o'clock that night the wind hauled around to the south, blowing a strong gale, and the sea ran very high, breaking over the boat badly. We were in constant danger of being swamped. Time and again the boat was half filled with water. We had a frightful time keeping the boat's end to the seas with our oars, and one oar was broken.

At daylight we were so exhausted from lack of sleep and the desperate labor of handling the boat with oars that it did not seem possible to survive much longer. Something had to be done at once.

Early on the morning of the 16th the boat nearly swamped several times. We couldn't hold her end up to the seas, and she'd go flying down into the deep green valleys between seas, broadside on, threatening to roll over and over and over and upset us into the sea. I was crazy for a sea anchor, but I didn't have any. However, since necessity is the mother of invention, I made one. We had six heavy woolen blankets, and these we placed one on top of the other, rolled them lengthwise and tied them firmly in the middle with a three-inch line over fifteen fathoms long. This bundle of blankets we passed over the stern, let all the line run out and fastened the end at the stern.

That sea anchor was a marvelous success. It acted instantly. That drag astern kept the boat stern on to the sea, hauling it through the seas and preventing the boat from tossing lightly on the crests. It reduced the chances of swamping to a minimum, provided we could keep her bailed out, and the spray, coming thick and fast, kept us bailing continually. Every little while, of course, we took fifteen or twenty gallons over the gunwales.

Looking back on it now, I am convinced that we didn't get that sea anchor out a minute too soon. The gale increased and the seas were vast rolling hills, breaking into foam all around us. The clouds flew by overhead at terrific speed. But with a hundred feet of line out on the drag we had a good strain on the line at all times. Moreover we had steerage way of about three miles an hour before the storm and with one man steering we did nicely. However, I kept two men at the oars, taking in the slack whenever necessary and keeping as steady strain on the line astern, and two men bailing. I knew that if our strength would outlast the storm we were comparatively safe.

Along in the afternoon of the 16th, however, we commenced seeing things. Remember we hadn't had any sleep (the mates and myself) since the night of the 11th, and we had worked continuously ever since. We couldn't keep our eyes open, but we couldn't sleep; that is, we didn't dare to. We were in a kind of stupor. Riding on the crest of those tremendous seas and looking down into those long green valleys; then rushing down the slopes of the seas like mad, got terribly monotonous. I think the seas hypnotized us. Along about noon Mr. Wilson declared we were in shallow water and if we could just manage to get around the point into the bight we could make a landing nicely. This stirred up Mr. Johansen, who declared he could see green fields and trees.

Strange how each man, fighting for his life, sees the things of his desire. The prospector dying of thirst on the desert, sees lakes and clear pools and waterfalls. But we had plenty of water. What we wanted was land, and we all saw it. I saw every port from Puget Sound to Valparaíso. There were long wharves with warehouses on them, and I could see the cluster of masts at these imaginary docks and in the roadstead. It made me homesick.

About two o'clock on the 16th the gale moderated and the seas, while still high, ceased breaking. We carefully divided

our daily meal, and anybody that wanted a second helping took his belt up a notch. Also, about this time a half-grown shark decided that our sea anchor was good to eat and commenced biting at it and jerking us around very rudely. At least all hands said they saw a shark, but personally, I am making no definite assertions. We had been seeing so many things, a change of scenery would not have surprised any of us. However, we decided to give ourselves the benefit of the doubt and hauled in the sea anchor.

The men wrung out the blankest as best they could, cowered in the bottom of the boat, covered themselves with the wet blankets and tried to sleep. Doubtless they succeeded. The sails were set again and away we went, steering north-east, as I was not sure of my position. I was not able to make an observation on the 16th.

We got through the night somehow. We dozed a little in spite of every effort of our will power, although it seems to me that no sooner would I close my eyes than Mr. Wilson would kick me viciously, and drop off to sleep himself, whereupon I'd kick him, but he, awakening, would kick Mr. Johansen, who kicked both of us. It was a long, horrible night of moving pictures and slap-stick tragedy, but finally the sun came up and the 17th was clear and warm.

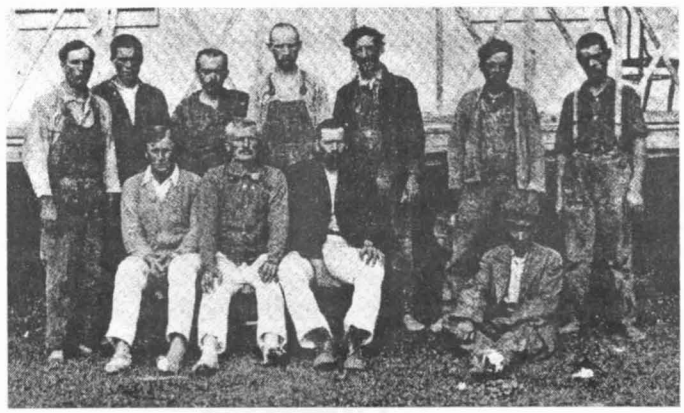
I let Mr. Wilson sleep two hours, while Johansen and I sat glowering and kicking at each other. We dared not trust the crew. As I said before they were good boys, but they didn't know how to sail a small boat. When Wilson was awakened he said he could stick it out till noon, so Johansen and I declared an armistice and slumbered where we sat. At noon, Mr. Wilson awakened me, and I took an observation. We were in latitude 28° 01' south.

The wind was now westerly, with frequent strong squalls, but our brief nap had refreshed us, so we slept in relays all day and night. The boat made bully progress, and we had our one scant meal. During the night of the 17th the sky was sufficiently clear to enable the moonlight to filter through, and we were enabled to steer by the compass after a fashion. We had no matches or lights of any kind.

On Wednesday the 18th it appeared as if we might have clear weather and so be enabled to hold our course. You have no idea how lonely a sailorman gets for a sight of his compass when he's steering a guesswork course. I got an observation at noon on the 18th and found myself in latitude 26° 53' south. I was trying to hang as closely as I could to the 27th parallel of latitude, because the 27th parallel passes close to Easter Island, so you can see how far we had steered out of our course. The breezes held strong from the west, with occasional heavy rain squalls all of the 18th, and sure enough we had a full moon that night, so we held on our course. In reality it was one continuous procession of gales, but a little old nothing like a gale didn't bother us now. We had ridden out a hurricane!

About this time it began to dawn on me that all the torture we had already endured was merely preliminary to the main event. We had been soaked in salt water since the 11th, and now our hands, and especially our feet, commenced to swell up very badly from the effects of this salt water pickle. Sitting down became the most excruciating agony. You see we each had to sit immovably in our allotted space on the hard thwarts, for we had eleven men in a twenty-two foot boat. With every pitch and roll our torsos swayed on our hips forward and back and from left to right, the while our hips remained stationary. That gave an effect of muscle grinding, grinding, grinding over bone until we moaned in our agony and helplessness. We tried kneeling until our knees began to grind, and then the real danger commenced. The poor devils in the crew would take a chance and stand up, and I had to keep shouting at them continually to sit down and keep the boat in trim. I couldn't get mad enough to crack one of them with an oar as a lesson to the others, because I wanted so to stand up myself. Well—I guess I sat down and cursed. I'm no cry-baby and I just had to have an outlet.

On Thursday, the 19th, I failed to get an observation. The wind hauled around into the south-west and then south, and I knew we were in for another southerly gale. We were making about eight miles an hour with a sail about as big as a large napkin. About five o'clock I dared not run before it any longer, so I



The shipwrecked crew of the *El Dorado*. This photograph is now in the collection of Mark and Carolyn Blackburn. Captain Benson is middle figure of the three seated men, left foreground. It appears the picture was taken at Edmunds' house at Mataveri. Although writing on the back states that the photograph was taken by Benson, it must have taken by Percy Edmunds because Benson is in the picture.

That was the night! We had a real gale, with mountainous seas, and we were at the oars all night, taking up the slack on the line, bailing and blinking salt spray out of our bloodshot, salt-rimmed, rheumy eyes. Our skins were cracked open, particularly the tender skin inside our thighs, where we chafed and chafed against our dungarees and ground and ground until were raw and bleeding, and then the salt water—whew! It was the most memorable night of my life as a sailor. But we got through, pretty much the worse for wear, but alive and a good fight left in us yet. We would have liked mighty well to have used some of our sweet water to wash our galled and bleeding bodies, but luxuries were not for us.

Early on Friday the 20th the gale moderated considerably, so we set part of the sail and were off again, with the spray whirling over us continually. It whipped into our faces and kept us sputtering, gasping and blinking hour after hour, but we had to make progress at any cost, so we scudded along and took out our grouch in cuss words, although all the spray in our eyes couldn't stop us from seeing things occasionally—particularly when the hunger pains got us.

At noon on the 20th I had a chance to make an observation, as it was vitally necessary to find our position in latitude. It was a terribly heart-breaking job, owing to the pitching and rolling of the boat, but finally I shot the sun and discovered that we were in latitude 27° 08' south. That was the best position we had been in thus far, as Easter Island is in latitude 27° 10' south at Mission house or Cook bay.

Now my real worries commenced. It had become very necessary to be extremely careful steering the little boat, as we had succeeded in running out our latitude and our course was new due east. Having come nine hundred miles through worse than death we were appalled with the horrible fear that we might run by Easter Island in the dark and if another gale came up we could never get back. We were very weak and emaciated and we knew if we missed the island it was us for Davy Jones' locker. It isn't hard to die, I imagine, but it's terrible to lose the kind of fight we had waged.

It had been a south wind all night, but in the afternoon it hauled around into the southeast, with more squalls, so we jammed on every stitch of canvas and cracked right along. We kept a keen lookout, for land might appear at any moment, and held right on our course.

We rode out the night safely, and on Saturday, June 21st, my observation at noon showed us in 27° 03' south. This indicated a drift to the north of five miles in twenty-four hours, and accordingly I set the course slightly more to the south, hoping to overcome this. We were in a mighty bad way, and very weak from lack of food. We had had so little starting I was forced to dole out just sufficient food to sustain life in our wretched bodies, because if we missed the island and couldn't beat back I was going to run for the mainland, and that was still twenty-one hundred miles away. I was going to make that grub last, you bet.

Sunday morning, June 22nd, dawned with promise of a fine day. We had a nice light breeze from the west. Our soup had long since gone the way of all good soup and we were living on salt-water-soaked soda crackers mixed with water and condensed milk into a sort of mess, of which I gave a cupful to each man at noon daily.

At about ten o'clock Sunday morning, with most of the crew asleep, grateful for the first real warmth from the sun since we had abandoned the El Dorado, Mr. Johansen relieved me at the tiller. I had been steering all morning and wanted a little sleep very badly. However, the wind was very light and I crawled forward to try to rig a canvas cover as a sail. One of the men was standing in the bow, acting as lookout, and I must say he certainly was a busy little lookout. He never shirked his job for more than a minute at a time, and then only to get the salt water out of his eyes, and rub them well so he could look again.

Presently this lad turned around and announced that he believed he saw something. I wasn't surprised. I'd just seen the tug Ranger snaking in a five-legged schooner over Grays Harbor bar myself, but I looked again. I couldn't see anything, but the lookout insisted he saw something that looked like land. So I awakened the crew and one after the other declared he saw land, and finally I saw it myself. It was two points on the port bow and just dipping into the horizon. I realized, of course, that it was Easter Island, and about thirty miles distant, as the highest point on the island is 1767 feet.

We felt pretty good, so I celebrated by issuing a double allowance of grub then and there. We bent the canvas cover on the little boat and she gathered speed steadily as the wind increased, and all the time that blessed land kept looming higher and higher. I think that was the pleasantest Sunday morning of my life, and if we had been at all a religious lot the day would certainly have suggested prayer. I am not even aware that we took the trouble to thank the Almighty for His care of us, but let no man doubt that we did not feel grateful, for we did.

At three in the afternoon the island seemed not so vary far away, so we got out the oars to help the boat along, for I wanted to land before dark. At five o'clock, with the point of the island toward which we were heading six or seven miles away, it commenced to get dark and the wind increased, still from the west. I saw we were in for another gale and that it would not be possible to land that night, so I just ran for shelter.

It was about eight o'clock that night when we hove to on the south side of the island under the lee of precipitous cliffs seemingly about a thousand feet high. We lay on the oars all night long, holding the boat just outside the line of breakers, while the gale howled over the cliffs against which the huge breakers hurled themselves in mighty thunderous salvos. When the moon came up we could see the big black clouds racing overhead, but we were safe under the lee of the island and could laugh at the gale. It was a rip-snorter, too.

It seemed bound to get us. It blew from the west all night, but with sun-up the wind hauled into the south and chased us out. We ran before it. From Southwest Cape where we spent the night to East Cape is fifteen miles and we had a good look at the island as we skipped along to our new shelter. It was fifteen miles of huge cliffs, with the sea thundering at the base and hurtling the spray sky high. We couldn't see a landing-place anywhere, nor any sign of human habitation or a living thing, and we had a hard task to keep the little boat before the wind. As we approached East Cape the cliffs grew higher and more precipitous. They were of lava formation.

Eventually we dodged under the lee of East Cape, where we were safe from the gale once more. However, Easter Island is triangular in shape and while we were safe from the gale we had practically no shelter from the swell and sea. I attempted to go further north, but the wind and sea drove us back, and in our deplorable physical condition we were glad to go back and under the lee of East Cape, lay to our oars again all day and night and wait for the gale to subside.

At dawn on the morning of the 24th—Tuesday—the wind abating, we pulled with what little strength we had along the coast, looking for a beach. The land is not so high in this direction, but we could see no landing until about eight A.M. we saw a little cove or inlet. We poked in gingerly and saw a beach about a hundred yards deep, sloping steeply up to the foot of the high bluff, but the beach was covered with big boulders and figuring a landing there entirely out of the question we started to pull further up the coast. But the wind and sea were against us, and at last I realized that we had reached the limit of our endurance. We were too weak to fight any longer, so I turned back to this little cove and in desperation ran for the beach. We went flying in on the crest of a huge breaker that swept us far up the

beach, and, fortunately, deposited us rather gently among the spume-swept boulders. We went overboard and eased her up on the beach by hand on the dead water of the next breaker, hauled her up so she wouldn't get mauled and—

No, we did NOT sit down to rest. After the first desperate effort to save the boat and our few miserable belongings we found we were unable to walk. Our feet were swollen to size eighteen, so we stretched out on our bellies in the wet sand and had a nice rest. When we moved we crawled on our hands and knees, groaning and protesting, and looking for all the world like gigantic sick crabs. But we were ashore at last after eleven days in that open boat, and oh, I can't tell you how good it felt. When we tried to stand erect we floundered around like seabirds on a ship's deck, for the motion of the sea was still in our brains.

After sprawling around for a few hours and eating a double ration of our condensed milk-soda-cracker slop, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Johansen, although their feet were in bad condition, decided to look for help. We had to find some sort of human habitation, for some of us, myself included, could not walk at all. The two mates managed to climb the bluff, and after they had gone some hours I picked out four of the strongest of the crew and had them drag the boat higher up the beach and prepare a shelter for us in a small cave in the base of the bluff. Here we were sheltered from the rain and wind, and as it was not cold we did not suffer particularly except from hunger and pain. We used up the last of our water and grub, and then six of the men endeavored to scale the bluff. I was afraid to trust to the two mates finding help in time, and help we had to have for two of the men and myself were unable to walk at all.

Four of the crew managed to reach the top of the bluff, but the other two were forced to roll and slide back to the beach. We spent the night in our cave safe from rain and gale, although the poor devils on top of the island put in a fearful night, stumbling along through the storm falling over lava rocks, crawling on all fours There were no trails, but plenty of lava rocks. However the sight of many domestic cattle and sheep, indicating a habitation somewhere on the island, cheered them on and finally, twenty four hours after leaving the beach, Wilson and Johansen came to the only settlement on the island. They had made nearly fourteen miles through the underbrush and lava beds and they were in a frightful condition upon arrival.

About nine o'clock the following morning as we were huddled in our cave we heard a great racket on top of the bluff, so we crawled out for a look-see. We saw a party of ten Kanakas coming down the cliffs very rapidly and their horses on top of the bluff. The Kanakas addressed us in Spanish, and as I speak a little Spanish, having run for many years to Chilean and Mexican ports, I managed to tell them we would have to have assistance up the cliff. With a Kanaka on each side of us we were finally hauled, pushed and carried up that bluff and lifted onto saddle-horses.

There is a universal belief that a sailor loves to ride horseback. Not this sailor—then. I thought I was seated on that hard thwart in the boat again! We made a journey of thirteen miles to the westward to the residence of Mr. P. Edmunds, an English gentleman and the only white man on the island. He dwells at Hanga-piko. On our way to Mr. Edmunds' establishment we passed through the native village of Hanga Roa, or Cook's bay, where the news that shipwrecked sailors had arrived at the island created great excitement. We were given a deal of handshaking and enthusiastic congratulations in Spanish, with here and there a word of English.

It was dark by the time we reached Mr. Edmund's residence. Like all Englishmen he has a name for his house. It is called "Mataveri." He received us very kindly, indeed, and had a good meal spread for us. It was the first "square" in thirteen days and we "licked our platters clean."

According to Mr. Edmunds we were the first shipwrecked crew coming in a ship's boat to land on Easter Island. What with such medical attention as he was able to afford us, coupled with good food and plenty of it, we were soon on the high road to recovery, for while we had had very little food during the eleven days in the open boat, what we had had was very nourishing. Had it not been for those thirty-eight cans of soup I found in the locker on the El Dorado we could never have survived. Me for soup hereafter.

By the way, speaking of soup, I met a fly American in Manga Reva who pleaded with me with tears in his eyes to tell him the brand of that soup and make an affidavit that it was that certain brand. I wondered what he was up to at the time, but I have since been assured that he doubtless planned to write a brief little story of my cruise, use the affidavit, and sell it to the manufacturer of the soup for an advertisement. I had a detailed story of the cruise written up in the El Dorado's log book by that time, and how that fellow did plead for a copy of the log, or even a look at it. But I as suspicious of the lubber, for some reason. He was too insistent, and I wouldn't tell him anything. A writing man to whom I showed my log said I would be a lobster to part with my soup rights. Soup manufacturers please take notice.

While I am on the subject of rights I might state that I ran into another man in Tahiti who wanted to swindle me out of my watch rights. Oh, yes, I have some watch rights. Remember, when I left the El Dorado I had no chronometer and was rather badly off as a navigator. All I had was the knowledge the Eater Island lay in latitude 27° 10' south, and I ran down the latitude and then steered east until I found the island which was easy because I was lucky. But after three months on Easter Island, with no signs of ever leaving it, I discovered that I was a hopeless old sailor. I got nervous and I simply had to go to sea again! I sailed from Easter Island in my ship's boat sixteen hundred miles to Manga Reva, in the Gambier group, and nine hundred miles further from Manga Riva to Tahiti, but you bet I had a chronometer then—and I slept nights. I did as nice a bit of navigation as ever I did in my life with an American watch of a brand that you can buy in any jewelry store for about fifteen dollars! The writer man who conned me on the soup says I had better retain my watch rights also. Apparently there are several ways of earning money that a sailor never dreams of, so if any watch manufacturer wants to brag to the world that his watch is a good as a chronometer, I can make affidavit that a certain American-made watch was used by me as a chronometer for twenty-five hundred miles and I lifted port both times as accurately as if I had the finest instrument in the world.

I had an interesting visit of one hundred and five days on

Easter Island. From all I have been able to learn the island was discovered by a Dutch admiral, one Ruggevein, on Easter Sunday, 1721. Cook and La Perose both visited the island subsequently, and in 1825 Captain Beache, of H. M. S. Blossom surveyed it. It was surveyed again by officers of the Chilean government in 1870. It was formally annexed to Chile in July, 1888, and in August 1899, when visited by H. M. S. Cormorant, the inhabitants comprised the Chilean governor and seven other Chileanos, together with 180 natives. It had then a large stock of cattle, sheep, pigs and horses—also poultry, mostly running wild.

The island is volcanic and possesses a number of extinct craters, none of which have been active for many years. Scattered all over the island are ancient colossal statues, sculptured in lava by the prehistoric inhabitants of the island. Of the vanished race who carved these huge statues nothing is known by the present inhabitants. I am unable to judge of the significance of these statues, but it certainly is mighty interesting to come across them in the wilderness of that most isolated of islands. Since it is 2030 miles from the coast of Chile and 1500 miles from the nearest inhabited island, with the exception of Pitcairn, what interested me was the problem of how, in such an isolated position, the island ever became inhabited. I am constrained to think that perhaps a thousand years ago some Kanaka skipper with his family busted my record for a small boat voyage. That isn't a hard record to beat, but I imagine he didn't stock up for the voyage, but arrived unexpectedly, as it were, and so I would like to know what brand of soup he used! And what did he do for a sea anchor in a blow. Something seems to tell me he hove one of his wives overboard and trailed her with a rope bent around her amidships.

Until the visit of H.M.S. Sappho in 1882 there was a vague native tradition to the effect that the original inhabitants had come in a large canoe from Rapa Island, which does not seem probable to a sailor. Rapa lies 1900 miles to west'ard and no canoe could navigate that distance against the usual trade winds. Mr. Alexander Salmon, the agent for the British commercial house of the Maison Brander, of Tahiti, who speaks the native language fluently, furnishes a more reliable account of native tradition on the subject.

The belief is general that originally they came from the east'ard in two canoes provisioned with yams, taro, etc. the old king (by name Hutu Metua, which means "Prolific Father") came in one canoe and the queen in the other. On making the island they separated, passing around in opposite directions and meeting again at Anakena on the north side. There they landed and settled on Mount Hatu-iti, where they build the stone houses and carved the great statues now to be seen there, although the first statue was not completed until fifty years after the landing.

The original name of the island was Tapito Tenua (land in the middle of the sea). In 1863 some Peruvian blackbirders came to the island and carried a number of the inhabitants off to work in the guano beds on the coast islands. Of course the poor devils never came back. The following year some Catholic missionaries came to the island, at which time the population was estimated at 1500. As is always the case with aboriginal people, they commenced to fade away under the white man's dominion and in 1867 only 900 remained. In 1878 the Maison Brander, which had been trading with the island for some years, very kindly removed 500 of the inhabitants to work on their sugar plantations at Tahiti and purchased the property of the missionaries on Easter Island. The missionaries then removed, with about 300 converts, to Manga Reva, so that at the time of the Sappho's visit there were only about 150 left. At the time of my visit there in 1913 there were less than one hundred inhabitants left, and these lived in terror of the thought that some day they may be removed from the island. The poor devils have been cruelly exploited. They somewhat resemble the Marquesans, being very light complexioned, and rather good-looking. The women, particularly, are very handsome.

The statues to which I refer are scattered all over the island and range in size from five to thirty-seven feet high, the average

A group of natives on Easter Island. The original photograph is now in the Mark and Carolyn Blackburn Collection. Writing on the back indicates that the photograph was taken by Captain Benson.

height being from fifteen to eighteen feet. They are carved from a gray compact lava found in the crater of Hatu-iti, where there are still many in an unfinished state. I guess the missionaries butted in.

The island has been leased by the Chilean government to one Julio Marlet as a stock ranch. Water is scarce, but at the back of the Mission House at Hanga Roa there is a spring known as Puna Pau (the unfailing spring). It is a curious fact that when a heavy swell prevails on the westward side of the island the waters in this spring rise perceptibly, although remaining perfectly fresh.

The Englishman, Edmunds, was the representative of Julio Marlet. In reality he was the King of Easter Island. He owns everybody and everything, and seems sane but contented. He was very kind to us and I appreciate it, but I wondered how a white man could live on Easter Island, year in and year out, with never any news of the world he was born in. Only an Englishman could do it. I suppose by the time my friend Edmunds is fifty years old he will be worth a little money, and then he'll sail home to Merrie England and find himself out of touch with the world. Then he'll buy a house and build a high stone wall around it and live inside and take a great deal of enjoyment from the sign on the gate: "Private Grounds. Keep Out. Beware of the Dog."

It was fully three weeks after our landing before we were in good condition again. I was pretty fit by that time. I had lost about twenty pounds on the trip. It will be year or two before some of the men are in condition again, however. Two of them, Carlson and Tassaman, nearly lost their minds. Carlson suffered worst, for when we abandoned the El Dorado he got into the boat with no clothing other than a cotton shirt and a pair of dungarees, and it was mid-winter in the South Pacific. Poor Carlson contracted the shakes in the boat and continued to shake for a week after landing. But a sailor is hard to kill and a Scandinavian sailor hardest of all, and the men all pulled through finally.

Well, as soon as we were fit again, what did Wilson and Johansen and I do but go horseback riding. We lived with Mr. Edmunds, while the crew occupied the deserted Mission House at the native village at Cook's Bay, about a mile and a half from Mataveri. We had all the horses we desired, and took our pick of a fine lot of saddlers. It was a great novelty to us and we enjoyed it immensely. We explored the island, which is about twenty-nine miles in circumference, and observed everything of interest. I cannot begin to tell you of them, because of lack of space, but I will tell you of one of the most interesting things we observed, and that was that our crew had moved down from the Mission House, and although the men could not speak Spanish (which the natives speak fluently), and the natives couldn't speak English or Norse, that was no bar to the courtship. I suppose a fellow who isn't fond of horseback riding and exploration gets lonesome on Easter Island, and as Mr. Wilson remarked to me, morals are largely a matter of geography. At any rate every sailor had a wife. As a sea captain I might have married the rascals, but Edmunds told me there was no marriage or giving in marriage on the island, and a stranger was always welcome.

There is an abundance of food on the island, money is unknown, the aborigines have left many fine stone houses, there is no high cost of living, and those boys of mine should worry, eh? There was mutton, beef, fowls, pigs, taro, yams, sweet potatoes and a lot of truck, and we all stacked on flesh rapidly. The Jap cook snaffled out the village belle, although I believe I have remarked previously on the enterprise of this fellow. He had a nice house built of lava blocks, with a thatched roof, and to see that Jap stretched at his ease on the floor while his light o' love did the cooking was a picture of perfect domestic bliss.

We had been on the island about two months, when Edmunds invited us to the roundup of his cattle. That was fine, and we enjoyed it so much. There were twenty-four of us on horseback and we combed the island from one end to the other, finally converging toward a huge corral. We rounded up about two thousand head, and had to do a lot of hard riding. If I had my life to live over again I'd be a cowboy. Life on the hurricane deck of a horse is great, and while at Easter Island I learned to throw a lasso passing well.

After the round-up life settled back into the old hum-drum rut, and I began to get tired of Easter Island. No vessel had called and while we had sighted a few steamers they had been too far off to communicate with. There was a possibility that we might remain there a year before a vessel would call for the accumulated wool and hides, and the more I thought of this indefinite delay the less it appealed to me. It was getting on toward the first of September and with the winter practically over I felt that I could make the run to Tahiti (2,500 miles) in my ship's boat. I spoke to Edmunds about it and at first he thought I was crazy, but finally he saw I was serious and like a good fellow he promised to do everything possible to aid me. So I started to prepare for the voyage. I had made up my mind that if no vessel touched at the island by the first of October, I would set sail in the ship's boat.

Having made up my mind, I felt relieved at once, and gladly entered into the task of rounding up the sheep. I learned a lot about sheep on that round-up. A sheep is an awful fool animal, and those on Easter Island were a poor lot. They were dying off very rapidly with rot and scabies. We sheared them and dipped them, and wrestled 'em around in a pond and had a bully time. We lost a lot of lambs on the way to the shearing camp, but that didn't seem to make any difference in the amount of noise. It was awful, their blatting; I wanted to be at sea and at peace again. We rounded up the wild horses later and that is one of the grandest outdoor sports I know of.

The Mission House in Easter Island lies exactly in latitude 27-10 south, longitude 109-26 west. With this information it is easy for any navigator to figure out to a second the exact Greenwich time at Easter Island. I did this and every day at 4 p.m. when I took my observation I rated both watches. I did this for thirty days, and discovered they were both excellent timepieces, one in particular being absolutely accurate. The other varied a few second daily, but I rated it carefully and could make a corresponding allowance for its variations. It lost about half a second daily.

I then had my boat brought around to the landing at Cook's Bay, overhauled and inspected it carefully and prepared for my start right after the round-up. I had several problems besetting me, the principal one of which was fire. There were no matches on the island, so I had to learn the native trick of making fire by rubbing two sticks together, this method being, with white men, a first aid to insanity. Eventually I got the knack of it, however, as did Drinkwater and Simonour, the two men I had persuaded to accompany me. Not being sailors they agreed to take a chance. Wilson and Johansen, being sailors, flatly refused to be party to such a crazy expedition. Ignorance is always bliss.

Down on the beach I found a little empty ten gallon steel oil drum. I cut it in half, retaining the half with the bottom. Then I cut a little square hole in the side of this section, and bent four pieces of scrap iron to form a sort of cage that hung half way down from the top of the drum which it gripped around the edge. Into this little cage I could lower a pot and make a fire under it by poking small fuel through the hole I had cut in the side of the drum. When it was finished I had a fine little galley range for my boat.

Next I filled my water kegs and put on an extra supply of water, stored a lot of wood for fuel under the little half-deck forward, where it would be dry and made good watertight receptacles for my supplies. Edmonds had a steer killed and we jerked the meat, loaded up with sweet potatoes (the most extraordinarily delicious big sweet potatoes I have ever seen, by the way), taro, eggs and a big side of bacon and some potatoes. The natives crowded around us during our preparations and wept that we should be so obstinate, for assuredly we would die

en route. However, I had no such fear. With summer coming on I was assured of fair weather and good winds, while with but three men in the boat, when we had ridden out a hurricane with eleven, we would have plenty of freeboard.

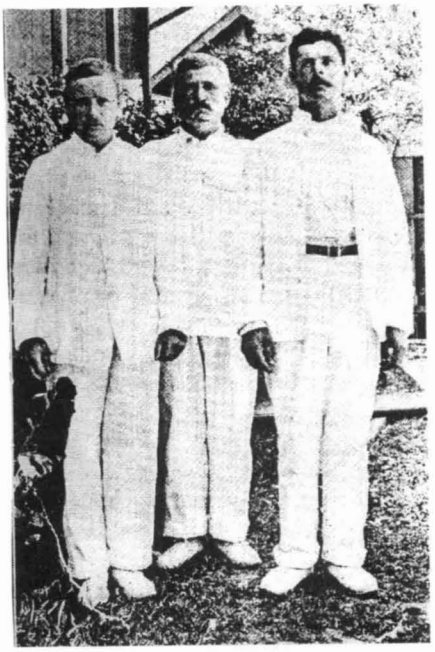
On the morning of the 6th of October, as I was winding up my perfect watch, the mainspring broke. It was a great disappointment to me, but as I had the other left and had rated it carefully, it was not such a disaster after all. I had planned to leave that day, but it was blowing so strong I decided to lie over, but the following day at noon we bade good-by to our good friends Edmunds and our fellows who were staying behind, and shoved off. Off Cook's harbor we hoisted our sails, and with a spanking little S.E. breeze at our tail we were off. The entire population waved us good-by until we were out of sight. Just before dusk Easter Island dipped below the horizon and we were committed to the enterprise.

I had started one day after the first quarter of the moon, for I had no matches, lamp nor oil and had to depend upon the moonlight to read the compass and steer. There were none of these necessities on Easter Island. The little boat leaped ahead at a great rate, tossing and jumping so she nearly made me seasick after my hundred and five days ashore. It was a great change from horseback riding, and poor Drinkwater was overcome and fed the fishes for quite a while. He was all right by morning, however, and I was all wrong. As I looked around at the only thing I have known intimately for thirty years—a wide sea and an unbroken skyline, I was appalled by a most terrible loneliness. I missed Easter Island, for it had been good to me and I loved it.

I laid my course directly for Manga Riva in the Gambier group. It was 1,600 miles distant. At eight o'clock we had breakfast. Tried to dodge the firestick by using a sun-glass to start a flame, but while the sun was strong the boat jumped so we couldn't concentrate, and the demon firestick claimed us in the end. Simoneur managed to get a flame finally and we had bacon and eggs.

Up to October 12th we made splendid progress. On the 13th it clouded up, the wind freshened and it rained, and about ten o'clock that night we had a terrific thunder-storm with lightning. We were in for another of those infernal gales and shipped a good deal of water in the heavy seas until it commenced to rain furiously, and that kept the big cross seas down. I took in the spreadsail and ran before it with just the jib spread as a sort of square sail all night. I was getting my old sea anchor out next morning, preparing to heave to, when the wind moderated and the gale was over by ten a.m. We had fine weather until the 18th, when we ran into another gale that lasted forty hours with continued heavy rain, and about wore us out. I had the sea anchor out most of the time, with the jib set as a squaresail. During the night God was good. A big ball of St. Elmo's fire appeared for company at the tip of our little mast and made fair light for steering.

From the 18th to the 23rd we had good weather and made splendid progress, reaching Manga Reva on the latter date. We were a hard-looking trio—sun-baked and half naked. No "Weary Willie" ever looked half so bad as I. We had made the run in sixteen days, an average of one hundred miles a day.



Three men who sailed the lifeboat of the *El Dorado* 2600 miles from Easter Island to Tahiti– L. Simoneur, Capt. Bensen and C. Drinkwater. This photo was taken in Tahiti.

As we approached Rikitea, the village and principal port of Manga Reva, a swarm of surprised natives came out in canoes and jabbered questions which we could not answer.

The French authorities there and a Captain Hoffman, an old trader, took us in hand and made much of us. We were fed and clothed and cleaned up and stayed there two days—just long enough to stretch our legs and take on water and provisions. The people couldn't do enough for us. On the 25th of October, however, we bade these kind people good-by and shaped our course for Tahiti. I had no worries for my chronometer watch had proved correct and apparently the rate I had given it at Easter island—a loss of half a second daily—was still correct.

We knocked around in a calm sea for half a day and then lit out. Knowing I would experience light winds I had taken the precaution to make another spread sail at Manga Reva, and it proved to be a great help. We made the nine hundred mile run to Tahiti without incident in eleven days, unless I count an adventure with a huge man-eating shark and a sword-fish.

Finally I got a large marlinespike, sharpened the end of it and lashed it on an oar, and the next time Mr. Shark rose alongside and gave us the once-over I harpooned him right through his mild appraising eye. I think I got to his brain. He gave a splash and departed in great haste and we didn't see him any more.

Just before we reached Tahiti a huge swordfish, pursuing smaller fish, took to darting backward and forward under our boat, his big six-foot sword grazing us time and time again. He kept that up for nearly two hours. I expected to be scuttled any moment. Finally he gave it up and left, and on the fifth day of November we pulled into the beautiful harbor of Tahiti, beached our little boat and went up to pay our respects to the American consul. He placed us in a hotel as the guest of my adopted Uncle Sam. Three weeks later we embarked on the steamer Moana for San Francisco, arriving on Friday morning, December 5th, 1913. I brought my little boat along too. It belonged to my owners, Messrs. Sanders & Kirchman, and when I

turned over to them the only piece of salvage from the El Dorado they told me to keep it for a souvenir. The El Dorado had been listed as missing and they had collected the insurance and had another ship waiting for me. I suppose some day I'll go back, but a present I'm taking a little vacation and seeing the moving-pictures.

That's about all of my yarn, except that a British steamer touched in at Easter Island a few months after I left, and took off the remainder of the crew. They were landed in Sydney, Australia. In Sydney at the time of their arrival there was a lime-juicer bound for Puget Sound, and I note by a clipping from a Port Townsend newspaper, sent me by a friend up there, that there was a sad scene on Easter Island when the crew finally left.

You know what a sailor is. Sweetheart in every port and all that sort of thing. He ups hook and away and it doesn't bother him any, but it appears there was something doing before the belles at Hanga Roa would let them go. It is stated (a sailor from the before-mentioned lime-juicer brings the tale to Puget Sound as 'twas told to him) that the chief of the Easter Islanders refused to grant a wholesale divorce to my fellows without alimony, and before they were permitted to embark on the British steamer, her skipper had to take pity on my crew and pay the alimony.

He gave each lady a bar of highly-scented, cheap, castile soap with red streaks in it—the kind they use in the second cabins.

Ship ahoy!

Our thanks to Thomas Christopher for providing us with a copy of Captain Benson's log.

To round out this story, *we include a few pages from* Mystic Isles of the South Seas *by Frederick O'Brien, who is the person mentioned by Captain Benson as "...another man in Tahiti who wanted to swindle me out of my watch rights." We pick up O'Brien's text on his page 162:*

"Goeltz picked up the "Daily Commercial News" of San Francisco, and idly read out the list of missing ships. There was only one in the Pacific of recent date whose fate was utterly unknown. She was the schooner *El Dorado*, which had left Oregon months before for Chile, and had not been sighted in all that time. The shipping paper said:

> What has become of the El Dorado, it is, of course, impossible to say with any degree of accuracy, but one thing is almost certain, and that is that the likelihood of her ever being heard of again is now practically without the range of possibility. Nevertheless she may still be afloat through in a waterlogged condition and drifting about in the trackless wastes of the South Pacific. Then again she may have struck one of the countless reefs that infest that portion of the globe, some entirely invisible and others just about awash. She is now one hundred and eighty-nine days out, and the voyage has rarely taken one hundred days. She was reported in Lat. 35:L40 N., long. 126:80 W., 174 days ago.

"There'll be no salvage on her," said Captain Pincher, "because if she's still afloat, she ain't likely to get in the track of any bloody steamer. I've heard of those derelic's wanderin' roun' a bloody lifetime, especially if they're loaded with lumber. They end up usually on some reef."

This casual conversation was the prelude to the strangest coincidence of my life. When I awoke the next morning, I found that the big sea had not come and that the sun was shining. My head full of the romance of wrecks and piracy, I climbed the hill behind the Tiare Hotel to the signal station. There I examined the semaphore, which showed a great white ball when the mail-steamships appeared, and other symbols for the arrivals of different kinds of craft, men-of-war, barks and schooners. There was a cozy house for the lookout and his family, and, as everywhere in Tahiti, a garden of flowers and fruit-trees. I could see Point Venus to the right, with the lighthouse, and the bare tops of the masts of the ships at the quays. Gray and red roofs of house peeped from the foliage below, and a red spire of a church stood up high.

The storms had ceased in the few hours before dawn, and the sun was high and brilliant. Moorea, four leagues away, loomed like a mammoth battle-ship, sable and grim, her turrets in the lowering clouds on the horizon, her anchors a thousand fathoms deep. The sun was drinking water through luminous pipes. The harbor was a gleaming surface, and the reef from this height was a rainbow of color. All hues were in the water, emerald and turquoise, palest blue and gold. I sat down and closed my eyes to recall old Walt's lines of beauty about the

> • World below the brine.
> Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,
> Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seed.
> The thick tangle, ... and pink turf.

When I looked again at the reef I espied a small boat, almost a speck outside the coral barrier. She was too small for an inter-island cutter, and smaller than those do not venture beyond the reef. She was downing her single sail, and the sun glinted on the wet canvas. I called to the guardian of the semaphore, and when he pointed his telescope at the object, he shouted out:

"Mais, c'est curieux! Et ees a schmall vessel, a sheep's boat!"

I waited for no more, but with all sorts of conjectures racing through my mind, I hurried down the hill. Under the club balcony I called up to Captain Goeltz, who already had his glass fixed. He answered:

"She's a ship's boat, with three men, a jury rig, and barrels and boxes. She's from a wreck, that's sure."

He came rolling down the narrow stairway, and together we stood at the quai du Commerce as the mysterious boat drew near. We saw that the oarsmen were rowing fairly strongly against the slight breeze, and our fears of the common concomitants of wrecks,• starvation and corpses—disappeared as we made out their faces through the glasses. They stood out bronzed and hearty. The boat came up along the embankment, one of the three steering, with as matter of fact an air as if they had returned from a trip within the lagoon. There was a heap of things in the boat, the sail, a tank, a barrel, cracker-boxes, blan-

kets, and some clothing.

The men were bearded like the pard, and in tattered garments, their feet bare. The one at the helm was evidently an officer, for neither of the others made a move until he gave the order:

"Throw that line ashore!"

Goeltz seized it and made fast to a ring-bolt, and then only at another command did the two stand up. We seized their hands and pulled them up on the wall. They were as rugged as lions in the open, burned as brown as Moros, their hair and beards long and ragged, and their powerful lean bodies showing through their rags.

"What ship are you from?" I inquired eagerly.

The steersman regarded me narrowly, his eyes squinting, and then said taciturnly, "Schooner *El Dorado*." He said it almost angrily, as if he were forced to confess a crime. Then I saw the name on the boat, "El Dorado S. F."

"Didn't I tell you so?" asked Lying Bill, who was in the crowd now gathered. "George, didn't I say the *El Dorado* would turn up?"

He glared at Goeltz for a sign of assent, but the retired salt sought kudos for himself. "I saw her first," he replied. "I was having a Doctor Funk when I looked toward the pass, and saw at once that it was a queer one."

The shipwrecked trio shook themselves like dogs out of the water. They were stiff in the legs. The two rowers smiled, and when I handed each of them a cigar, they grinned, but one said:

"After we've e't. Our holds are empty. We've come thirty-six hundred miles in that dinghy."

"I'm captain N. P. Benson of the schooner *El Dorado*," vouchsafed the third. "Where's the American Counsul?"

I led them a few hundred feet to the office of Dentist Williams, who as acting as consul for the United States. He had a keen love of adventure, and twenty years in the tropics had not dimmed his interest in the marvelous sea. He left his patient and closeted himself with the trio, while I returned to their boat to inspect it more closely.

All the workers and loafers of the waterfront were about it, but Goeltz would let none enter it, he believing it might be needed untouched as evidence of some sort. There are no wharf thieves and no fences in Tahiti, so there was no danger of loss, and, really, there was nothing worth stealing but the boat itself.

Captain Benson and his companions hastened from the dentist's to Lovaina's, where they were given a table on the veranda alone. They remained an hour secluded after Iromea and Atupu had piled their table with dishes. They drank quarts of coffee, and ate a beefsteak each, dozens of eggs, and many slices of fried ham, with scores of hot biscuits. They never spoke during the meal. A customs-officer had accompanied them to the Tiare Hotel, for the French Government wisely made itself certain that they might not be an unknown kind of smugglers, pirates, or runaways. Their boat had been taken in charge by the customs bureau, and the men were free to do what they would.

When they came from their gorging to the garden, they picked flowers, smelled the many kinds of blossoms, and then the sailors lighted their cigars. This pair were Steve Drinkwater, a Dutchman; and Alex Simoneau, a French-Canadian of Attleboro, Massachusetts.

"Where's the *El Dorado*?" I asked the captain.

Again he looked at me, suspiciously.

"She went down in thirty-one degrees: two minutes, south and one hundred twenty-one: thirty-seven west," he said curtly, and turned away. There was pride and sorrow in his Scandinavian voice, and a reticence not quite explicable. The three, as they stood a moment before they walked off, made a striking group. Their sturdy figures, in their worn and torn clothes, their hairy chests, their faces framed in bushes of hair, their bronzed skins, and their general air of fighters who had won a battle in which it was pitch and toss if they would survive, made me proud of the race of seamen the world over. They are to-day almost the only followers of a primeval calling, tainted little by the dirt of profit-seeking. They risk their lives daily in the hazards of the ocean, the victims of cold-blooded insurance gamblers and of niggardly owners, and rewarded only with a seat in the poorhouse or a niche in Davy Jones's Locker. I was once of their trade, and I longed to know the happenings of their fated voyage.

Next morning the three were quite ordinary-looking. They were shorn and shaved and scrubbed, and rigged out in Schlyter's white drill trousers and coats. They had rooms under mine in the animal-yard. They were to await the first steamship for the United States, to which country they would be sent as shipwrecked mariners by the American consulate. This vessel would not arrive for some weeks. The captain sat outside his door on the balcony, and expanded his log into a story of his experiences. He had determined to turn author, and to recoup his losses as much as possible by the sale of his manuscript. With a stumpy pencil in hand, he scratched his head, pursed his mouth, and wrote slowly. He would not confide in me. He said he had had sufferings enough to make money out of them, and would talk only to magazine editors.

"There's Easter Island," he told me. "Those curiosities there are worth writing about, too. I've put down a hundred sheets already. I'm sorry, but I can't talk to any one. I'm going to take the boat with me, and exhibit it in a museum and speak a piece."

He was serious about his silence, and as my inquisitiveness was now beyond restraint, I tried the sailors. They would have no log, but their memories might be good.

Alex Simoneau, being of French descent, and speaking the Gallic tongue, was not to be found at the Tiare. He was at the Paris, or other café, surrounded by gaping Frenchmen, who pressed upon him Pernoud, rum, and the delicate wines of France. So great was his absorption in his new friends, and so unbounded their hospitality, that M. Lontane laid him by the heels to rest him. Simoneau was wiry, talking the slang of the New York waterfront, swearing that he would "hike for Attleboro, and hoe potatoes until he died." I was forced to seek Steve Drinkwater. Short, pillow-like, as red-cheeked as a winter apple, and yellow-haired, he was a Dutchman, unafraid of anything, stolid, powerful, but not resourceful. I called Steve to my room above Captain Benson's, and set before him a bottle of schnapps, in a square-faced bottle, and a box of cigars.

"Steve," I said, "that squarehead of a skipper of yours

won't tell me anything about the *El Dorado's* sinking and your great trip in the boat. He said he's going to write it up on the papers, and make speeches about it in a museum. He wants to make money out of it."

"Vere do ve gat oop on dat?" asked the Hollander, sorely. "Ve vas dere mit 'im, und vas ve in de museum, py damage? Dot shkvarehet be'n't de only wrider?"

I shuddered at the possible good fortune. I transfixed him with a sharp eye.

"Steve," I asked gently, "did you keep a log? Pour yourself a considerable modicum of the Hollands and smoke another cigar."

"Vell," said the seaman, after obeying instructions, "I yoost had vun hell of a time, und he make a long rest in de land, I do py dammage! I keep a leedle book from off the day ve shtart ouid."

I heard the measured pace of the brave "shkvarehet" below as he wracked his brain for words. I would have loved to aid him, to do all I could to make widely known his and his crew's achievements and gain him fortune. However, he would sow his ink and reap his gold harvest, and I must, by master or by man, hear and record for myself the wonderful incidents of the *El Dorado's* wreck. The insurance was doubtless long since paid on her, and masses said for the repose of the soul of Alex Simoneau. The world would not know of their being saved, or her owners of the manner of her sinking, until these three arrived in San Francisco, or until a few days before, when the steamship wireless might inform them.

Steve came back with a memorandum book in which he had kept day by day the history of the voyage. But it was in Dutch, and I could not read it. I made him comfortable in a deep-bottomed rocker, and I jotted down my understanding of the honest sailor's Rotterdam English as he himself translated his ample notes in his native tongue. I pieced these out with answers to my questions, for often Steve's English was more puzzling than pre-Chaucer poetry.

The *El Dorado* was a five-masted schooner, twelve years old, and left Astoria, Oregon, for Antofagasta, Chile, on a Friday, more than seven months before, with a crew of eleven all told: the captain, two mates, a Japanese cook, and seven men before the mast. She was a man-killer, as sailors term sailing ships poorly equipped and undermanned. The crew were of all sorts, the usual waterfront unemployed, wretchedly paid and badly treated. The niggardliness of owners of ships caused them to pick up their crews at haphazard by paying crimps to herd them from lodging-houses and saloons an hour or two before sailing to save day's wages. Once aboard, they were virtual slaves, subject to the whims and brutality of the officers, and forfeiting liberty and even life if they refused to submit to all conditions imposed by these petty bosses.

Often the crimps brought aboard as sailors men who had never set foot on a vessel. On the *El Dorado* few were accustomed mariners, and the first few weeks were passed in adjusting crew and officers to one another, and to the routine of the overloaded schooner. When they were fifteen days out they spoke a vessel, which reported them, and after that they saw no other. The mate was a bucko, a slugger, according to Steve, and was hated by all, for most of them during the throes of seasickness had had a taste of his fists.

On the seventy-second day out the *El Dorado* was twenty-seven hundred miles off the coast of Chile, having run a swelling semicircle to get the benefit of the southeast trades, and being far south of Antofagasta. That was the way of the wind, which forced a ship from Oregon to Chile to swing far out from the coast, and make a deep southward dip before catching the south-west trades, which would likely stay by her to her port of discharge.

They had sailed on a Friday, and on Wednesday, the eleventh of the third month following, their real troubles began. Steve's diary, as interpreted by him, after the foregoing, was substantially as follows, the color being all his:

"From the day we sailed we were at the pumps for two weeks to bale the old tub out. Then she swelled, and the seams became tight. There was bad weather from the time we crossed the Astoria bar. The old man would carry on because he was in a hurry to make a good run. The mate used to beat us, and it's a wonder we didn't kill him. We used to lie awake in our watch below and think of what we'd do to him when we got him ashore. All the men were sore on him. He cursed us all the time, and the captain said nothing. You can't hit back, you know. He would strike us and kick us for fun. I felt sure he'd be murdered; but when we got into difficulty and could have tossed him over, we never made a motion.

"On the seventy-third day out, came the terror. The wind is from the southeast. There is little light. The sea is high, and everything is in a smother. We took down the topsails and furled the spanker. The wind was getting up, and the call came for all hands on deck. We had to watch and watch until then. That's four hours off and four hours on. When the watch below left their bunks, that was the last of our sleep on the El Dorado. A gale was blowing by midnight. We were working all the time, taking in sail and making all snug. There was plenty of water on deck. Schooner was bumping hard on the waves and making water through her seams. We took the pumps for a spell.

"We had no sleep next day. In the morning we set all sails in a lull, but took them down again quickly, because the wind shifted to the northwest, and a big gale came on. Now began trouble with the cargo. We had the hold filled with lumber, planks and such, and on the deck we had a terrible load of big logs. These were to hold up the walls and roofs in the mines of Chile. Many of them were thirty-six feet long, and very big around. They were the trunks of very big trees. They were piled very high, and the whole of them was fastened by chains to keep them from rolling or being broken loose by seas. In moving about the ship we had to walk on this rough heap of logs, which lifted above the rails. They were hard to walk on in a perfectly smooth sea, and with the way the *El Dorado* rolled and pitched, we could hardly keep from being thrown into the ocean.

"This second day of the big storm, with the wind from the northeast, the *El Dorado* began to leak badly again. All hands took spells at the pumps. We were at work every minute. We left the ropes for the pumps and the pumps for the ropes. We double-reefed the mizzen, and in the wind this was a terrible job. It nearly killed us. At eight o'clock to-night we could not see five feet ahead of us. It was black as hell, and the schooner

rolled fearfully. The deck-load then shifted eight inches to starboard. This made a list that frightened us. We were all soaking wet now for days. The after-house separated from the main-deck, and the water became six feet deep in the cabin.

"We had no sun at all during the day, and at midnight a hurricane came out of the dark. All night we were pulling and hauling, running along the great logs in danger always of being washed away. We had to lash the lumber, tightening the chains, and trying to stop the logs from smashing the ship to pieces. It did not seem that we could get through the night.

"This is Friday. When a little light of daylight came, we saw that everything was awash. The sea was white as snow, all foam and spindrift. It did not seem that we could last much longer. The small boat that had been hanging over the stern was gone. It had been smashed by combers. We should have had it inboard, and the mate was to blame. Now we took the other boat, the only one left, and lashed it upright to the spanker-stays. In this way it was above the logs and had a chance to remain unbroken.

"We sounded the well, and the captain ordered us again to the pumps. These were on deck between the logs, which were crashing about. We couldn't work the pumps, as there was seven feet of water in there on deck. The second mate spoke to the captain that it would be best to start the steam pump. The smokestack and the rest of the steam fittings were under the fo'c'sle head. It took a long time to get them out, and then the steam pump would not work. The water gained on us all the time now, and the captain ordered us to throw the deck-load overboard. We were nearly dead, we were so tired and sleepy and sore. This morning, the cook served coffee and bread when daylight came at six o'clock. That was the last bit of food or drink we had on the *El Dorado*.

"The taking off of the great chain was a murderous job. When we loosened it, the huge seas would sweep over the logs and us while we tried to get them overboard. It was touch and go. We had to use capstanbars to pry the big logs over and over. We tried to push them with the rolling of the ship. One wave would carry a mass of the logs away, and the next wave would bring them back, crashing into the vessel, catching in the rigging, and nearly pulling it down, and the masts with it. Dodging those big logs was awful work, and if you were hit by one, you were gone. They would come dancing over the side on the tops of the waves and be left on the very spot from which we had lifted them overboard. The old man should have thrown the deckload over two days before.

The water now grew deeper all the time, and the ship wallowed like a waterlogged raft. The fo'c's'le was full of water. The *El Dorado* was drowning with us aboard.

"We were all on deck because we had nowhere else to go. There was nothing left in the cabin or the fo'c's'le but water. The sea was now like mountains, but it stopped breaking, so that there was a chance to get away. We were hanging on to stays and anything fixed.

"The captain now gave up hope, as we had long ago. He ordered all hands to make ready to lower the one boat we had left, and to desert the ship. We had a hard time to get this boat loose from the spanker-stay, and we lowered it with the spanker-tackle. Just while we were doing that, a tremendous wave swept the poop, with a battering-ram of logs that had returned. Luckily, the boat we were lowering escaped being smashed, or we had all been dead men now.

"We filled a tank with twenty-five gallons of water from the scuttle-butts and carried it to the boat. The old man ordered the cook and the boy to get some grub he had in a locker in his cabin, high up, where he had put it away from the flood. The cook and the boy were scared stiff, and when they went into the cabin, a sea came racing in, and all saved was twenty pounds of soda crackers, twelve one-pound tins of salt beef, three of tongue, thirty-two cans of milk, thirty-eight of soup, and four of jam.

"We went into the boat with nothing but what we wore, and that was little. Some of us had no coats, and some no hats, and others were without any shoes. We were in rags from the terrible fight with the logs and the sea. The old man went below to get his medicine-chest. He threw away the medicine, and put his log and the ship's papers in it. He took up his chronometer to bring it, when a wave like that which got the cook and the boy knocked the skipper over and lost the chronometer. All he got away with was his sextant and compass and his watch, which was a good as a chronometer.

"We got into the boat at four o'clock. The boat had been put into the water under the stern and made fast by a rope to the taffrail. We climbed out the spanker-boom and slid down another rope. The seas were terrific, and it was a mercy that we did not fall in. We had to take a chance and jump when the boat came under us. Last came the old man, and took the tiller. He had the oars manned, and gave the order to let go. That was a terrible moment for all of us, to cast loose from the schooner, bad as she was. There we were all alone in the middle of the ocean, bruised from the struggle on deck, and almost dying from exhaustion and already hungry as wolves. In twenty-four hours we had had only a cup of coffee and a biscuit.

"It was very dark, and we had no light. We were, however, glad to leave the *El Dorado*, because our suffering on her for weeks had been as much as we could bear. The last I saw of the schooner she was just a huge, black lump on the black waters. We rose on a swell, and she sank into a valley out of sight.

"The captain spoke to us now: 'We have a good chance for life,' he said. "I have looked over the chart, and it shows that Easter Island is about nine hundred miles northeast by east. If we are all together in trying, we may reach there.'

"None of us had ever been to Easter Island, and hardly any of us had ever heard of it. It looked like a long pull there. All night the captain and the mate took turns in steering, while we, in turn, pulled at the oars. We did not dare put a rag of canvas on her, for the wind was big still. The old man said that as we had both latitude and longitude to run, we would run out the latitude first, and then hope for slant to the land. We were then, he said, in latitude 81° south, and longitude 121° west. That being so, we had about three hundred miles to go south and about six hundred east. He said that Pitcairn Island was but six hundred miles away, but that the prevailing winds would not let us sail there. We set the course then, for Easter Island. We wondered whether Easter Island had a place to land, and whether there were any people on it. There might be savages and cannibals.

"It rained steady all night, and the sea spilled into the boat now and then. Two of us had to bale all the time to keep the boat afloat. We were soaked to the skin with fresh and salt water, weak from the days of exposure and hunger, and we were barely able to keep from being thrown out of the boat by its terrible rocking and pitching, and yet we all felt like singing a song. All but the Japanese cook. Iwata had almost gone mad, and was praying to his joss whenever anything new happened. During the night a wave knocked him over and crushed one of his feet against the tank of drinking water. The salt water got into the wound and swelled it, and he was soon unable to move.

"The second day in the small boat was the captain's forty-eighth birthday. The old man spoke of it in a hearty way, hoping that when he was forty-nine he would be on the deck of some good ship. There was no sign of the *El Dorado* that morning. But with wind and sea as they were, we could not have seen the ship very far, and had made some distance under oar-power during the night. We put up our little sail at nine o'clock, though the wind was strong. The skipper said that we could not expect anything but rough weather, and that we had to make the best of every hour, considering what we had to eat and that we were eleven in the boat. The wind was now from the southwest, and we steered northeast. We had to steer without compass because it was dark, and we had no light.

"We had our first bite to eat about noon of this second day out. We had then been nearly three months at sea, or, to be exact, it was seventy-eight days since we had left port. It was thirty hours after the coffee and biscuit on the *El Dorado*, and God knows how much longer since we had had a whole meal, and now we didn't have much. The old man bossed it. He took a half-bucket of fresh water, and into this he put a can of soup. This he served, and gave each man two soda crackers and his share of a pound of corned beef. We dipped the crackers into the bucket. (I tell you it was better than the ham and eggs we had at the hotel when we landed.) We had this kind of a meal twice a day, and no more.

"The next day the wind was again very strong, with thunder and lightning, and we ran dead before the wind with no more sail than a handkerchief. The sea began to break over the boat, and our old man said that we could not live through it unless we could rig up a sea-anchor. We were sure we would drown. We made one by rolling four blankets together tightly and tying around them a long rope with which our boat was made fast to the ship when we embarked. This we let drag astern about ninety-feet. It held the boat fairly steady, and kept the boat's head to the seas. We fastened it to the ring in the stern. We used this sea-anchor many times throughout our voyage, and without it we would have gone down for sure. Of course we took in a great deal of water, anyhow; but we could keep her bailed out, and the sea-anchor prevented her from swamping.

"The nights were frightful, and many times all of us had terrible dreams, and sometimes thought we were on shore. Men would cry out about things they thought they saw, and other men would have to tell them they were not so. We were always up and down on top of the swells, and our bodies ached so terribly from the sitting-down position and from the joggling of the motion that we could cry with pain. The salt water got in all of our bruises and cracked our hands and feet, but there was no help for us, and we had to grin and bear it. A shark took hold of our sea-anchor and we were afraid that he would tear it to pieces.

"Every day the captain took an observation when he could, and told us where we were. We made about a hundred miles a day, bur very often we steered out of our course because we had no matches or lantern.

"On the eighteenth we were in latitude 26° 53' South, and the captain said that Easter Island was in the 27th degree, so after all we had steered pretty well.

"On the night of the nineteenth, we had a fearful storm. It seemed worse than the hurricane we had on the El Dorado. All nightlong we thought that every minute would end us, and we lay huddled in misery, not caring much whether we went down or not. But the next morning, we set part of the sail again, and at noon that day the captain took a sight and found that we were in latitude 27° 8' south. Easter Island is 27° 10' south. And now we began to fear that we might run past Easter Island. If we did, we knew we could never get back with the wind. We had squall after squall now, but we felt sure that soon we must see land. Our soup was all gone, and we were living on the soda crackers mixed with water and milk. Each of us got a cupful of this stuff once a day.

"On the twenty-second, when we were nine days out, I saw the land at ten o'clock in the morning, thirty miles away. We felt pretty good over that, and had two cupfuls of the mixture, because we felt we were nearly safe. My God! what we felt when we saw the rise of that land! The captain said it was Easter Island for certain, but that it was not a place that any merchant ships ever went, as there was no trade there. Once we saw land we could not get any nearer to it. We tried to row toward it, but the wind was against us. Two days we hung about the back of that island, just outside the line of breakers. We were afraid to risk a landing, for the coast was rocky. On the eleventh day we saw a spot where the rocks looked white, and we rowed in toward it with great pains and much fear. A big sea threw us right upon a smooth boulder, and we leaped from the boat and tried to run ashore. We were weak and fell down many times. Finally we got a hold and we carried everything out of the boat, and after hours hauled it up out of reach of the breakers.

"There was a cliff that went right up straight from the rocks, and we could not climb it, we were so weak from hunger and the cramped position we had had to keep in the boat. We laid down a while, and then it was decided that the first and second mates should have a good feed and try to get up the precipice. We were taking risks, because we had very little grub left. It was about a hundred feet up, and we watched them closely as they went slowly up. They did not come back, and we were much afraid of what they might find. We did not know but there might be savages there. During the day the other sailors got up, leaving the old man and me to watch the boat.

"Help arrived for us. The mates had walked all night, and at daybreak they reached the house of the head man, employed by the owner of Easter Island. It was a sheep and horse island. The mates were fed, and then they went on to the house of the manager. Horses were gotten out, and bananas and *poi* sent to

us. The water just came in time, because we were all out. They brought horses for all of us then, and after we had started the people of the island went ahead and came back with water and milk, which did us a world of good. At the house of the governor we had a mess of brown beans, and then we all fell asleep on the floor. God knows how long we slept, but when we waked up we were like wolves again. We then had beans with fresh killed mutton, and that made us all deathly sick because our stomachs were weak."

Underneath us, while the red-cheeked and golden-haired Steve uttered his puzzling sentences in English, I heard from time to time the heavy tread of Captain Benson. He was, doubtless, living over again the hours of terror and resolution on the *El Dorado* and in the boat, and seeking to find words to amplify his log by his memories. I heard him sit down and get up more than once; while opposite me in an easy-chair, with his glass of Schiedam schnapps beside him, was the virile Dutchman, hammering in his breast-swelling story of danger and courage, of starvation and storm. I sighed for a dictaphone in which the original Dutch-English might be recorded for the delight of others.

Alex Simoneau came back after a night of the hospitality of M. Lontane, and soon was joyous again, telling his wondrous epic of the main to the beach-combers in the parc de Bougainville or in the Paris saloon, where the brown and white toilers of land and sea make merry.

"A man that goes to sea is a fool," he said, with a bang of his fist on the table that made the schnapps dance in its heavy bottle. "My people in Massachusetts are all right, and like a crazy man I will go to sea when I could work in a mill or on a farm. They must think I'm dead by now."

Alex was corroborative of all that Steve said, but I could not pin him down to hours or days. He was too exalted by his present happy fate—penniless, jobless, family in mourning, but healthy, safe, and full-stomached, not to omit an ebullience of spirits incited by the continuing wonder of each new listener and the praise for his deeds and by the conviviality of his admirers.

Alex was sure of one point, and that was that the *El Dorado* was overloaded.

"Dose shkvarehet shkippers vould dake a cheese-box to sea mit a cargo of le't," commented Steve. "All day care for is de havin' de yob. De owner he don't care if de vessel skin mit de insurance."

When Alex had shuffled out of the cottage, I gave the Dutchman the course of his narrative again.

"You were safe on Easter Island, and ill from stuffing yourself with fresh mutton," I prompted. "And now what?"

Steve spat over the rail.

"Ram, lam', sheep, und muddon for a hundred and fife days. Dere was noding odder. Dot's a kveer place, dot Easter island, mit shtone gotts lyin' round und det fulcanoes, und noding good to eat. Ve liffed in a house de English manager gif us. Dere's a Chile meat gompany owns de island, und grows sheep. Aboud a gouple of hundred kanakas chase de sheep. Ve vas dreaded vell mit de vimmen makin' luff und the kanakas glad mit it. Dere vas noding else to do. De manager he say no ship come for six months, und he vanted us to blant bodadoes, und ve had no tobacco. He say de bodadoes get ripe in eight months, und I dink if I shtay dere eight months I go grazy. Ve vas ragged, und efery day ve go und look for a vessel. Ve gould see dem a long vay ouid, und ve made signals und big fires, but no ship efer shtopped. De shkipper made a kvarrel mit de mates, und de old man he say he go away in de boat, und he bick Alex und me because ve vas de bestest sailormen. Ve vas dere nearly four months ven we shtart ouid. De oder men dey vas sore, but dey vanted de old man to bromise to gif dem big money, und ve go for noding. Ve fix oop de boat und ve kvit."

Steve went on to describe how they fixed up the boat for the voyage by making guards of canvas about the sides, and an awning which they could raise and lower. They took a ten-gallon steel oil-drum and made a stove out of it. They cut it in two at the middle and kept the bottom half. They then made a place for holding a pot, with pieces of scrap-iron fixed to the side of the drum, so that they could make a fire under the pot without setting fire to the boat. Then the captain set them to learning to make fire by rubbing sticks, and after many days they learned it. The manager had a steer killed, and they jerked the meat and loaded up their boat beside with sweet potatoes, taro, white potatoes, five dozen eggs, and twenty gallons of water in their tank, with twenty-five more in a barrel.

Then bidding good-by to everybody who gathered to see them off, they steered for Pitcairn Island. They soon found that the prevailing wind would not permit them to make that course, and so they laid for Mangareva in 28° south and 134° west, sixteen hundred miles distant. They had to go from 28° south and 110° west, 5° of latitude and 24° of longitude. Again they were at the mercy of the sea, but now they had only three men in the boat, and had enough food for many days, rough as it was. In the latitude of Pitcarin, the island so famous because to it fled the mutineers of the *Bounty,* they all but perished. For two days a severe storm nearly overwhelmed them. The boat was more buoyant, and with the sea-anchor trailing they came through the trial without injury. Steve said the lightning was "Yoost like a leedle bid of hell." It circled them about, hissed in the water, and finally struck their mast repeatedly, so that the wise captain took it down. The entire heavens were a mass of coruscating electricity, and they could feel the air alive with it. They were shocked by the very atmosphere, said Steve, and feared for their lives every moment. The sea piled up, the wind blew a gale, and death as close at hand. They wished they had not left Easter Island, and envied those who had remained there.

But the rode it out, with their pile of blankets a-trail, and with helm and oars alert to keep the boat afloat.

The gale amended after several days, and on the sixteenth day from their departure they reached Mangareva. That island is in the Gambier group, and a number of Europeans live there. The castaways were received generously, and were informed that a schooner was expected in a fortnight, which might carry them to some port on their way home. But the old man said they must push on. He had to report to his owners the loss of the *El Dorado*; he had to see his family. They had come twenty-six hundred miles since deserting the schooner, and the thousand miles more to Tahiti was not a serious undertaking. He persuaded Steve and Alex to his manner of thinking, and with the boat stocked with provisions they took the wave again, after a

couple of days at Mangareva.

Now the bad weather was over. The sea was comparatively smooth, and the breeze favorable. But fate still had frowns for them, as if to keep them in terror. Sharks and swordfish, as though resenting the intrusion of their tiny craft in waters where boats were seldom seen, attacked them furiously. Five times a giant shark launched himself at their boat, head on, and drove them frantic with his menace of sinking them. They were so filled with this dread that they fastened a marlinespike in the spar, and despite probability of provoking the shark to more desperate onslaughts, manœuvered so that they were able to kill him with a blow.

The next day a swordfish of alarming size played about them, approaching and retreating, eying them and acting in such a manner that they felt sure he was challenging the boat as a strange fish whose might he disputed. One thrust of his bony weapon, and they might be robbed of their chance for life. They shouted and banged on the gunwales, and escaped.

Steve hurried through this part of his diary. So near to safety then, he had had not much thought for a record. There was little more to tell, for after the lightning, the sharks, and the swordfish, they had had no unusual experiences. They had made the voyage of nearly four thousand miles from the pit of water in which they had left the *El Dorado*, and were glad that they had not stayed behind on Easter Island. Steve had only good words for the skipper's skill as a seaman, but now that they were there, he would like to be assured of his wages. The captain said he did not know what the owners would do about paying Steve for the time since the *El Dorado* sank. He was sure she had gone down immediately, for, he said, he would not have left his ship had he not been certain she could not stay on the surface. He contrasted his arrival in Papeete with his coming years before in the brig *Lurline*, when he brought the first phonograph to the South Seas. Crowds had flocked to the quay to hear it, and it was taken in a carriage all about the island.

The superb courage of these men, their marvelous seamanship, and their survival of all the perils of their thousands of miles' voyage were not lessened in interest or admiration of their personality. But one realized daily, as one saw them chewing their quids, devouring rudely the courses served by Lovaina, or talking childishly of their future, that heroes are the creatures of opportunity. It is true Steve and Alex were picked of all the crew for their sea knowledge and experience, their nerve and willingness, by the sturdy captain, and that he too, was a man big in the primitive qualities, a viking, a companion for a Columbus; but—they were peculiarly of their sept; types molded by the wind-swept spaces of the vasty deep, chiseled by the stress of storm and calm, of burning, glassy oceans, and the chilling, killing berg; men set apart from all the creeping children of the solid earth, and trained to seize the winds from heaven for their wings, to meet with grim contempt the embattled powers of sky and wave, and then, alas! On land to become the puny sport of merchant, crimp, and money-changer, and rum and trull.

Goeltz, Lying Bill, Llewellyn, and McHenry sat in the Cercle Bougainville with eager looks as I read them the diary of Steve Drinkwater. The seamen held opinions of the failure of Captain Benson's seamanship at certain points, and all knew the waters through which he had come.

"Many of the people of Mangareva came from Easter Island," said Lying Bill. "There was a French missionary brought a gang of them there. 'E was Père Roussel, and 'e ran away with 'em because Llewellyn's bloody crowd 'ere tried to steal 'em and sell 'em. They lived at Mangareva with 'im till he died a few years ago, and they never went back."

Llewellyn lifted his dour eyes. There was never such a dule countenance as his, dark naturally with his Welsh and Tahitian blood, and shaded by the gloom of his soul. He looked regretfully at Captain Pincher.

"You are only repeating the untruthful assertion of that clergyman," he said accusingly. "He put it in a pamphlet in French. My people have had to do with Easter Island for forty years. I lived there several years and, as you now, I made that island what it is now, a cattle and sheep ranch. It is the strangest place, with the strangest history in the world. If we knew who settled it originally and carved those stone gods the Dutch sailor spoke of, we would know more about the human race and its wanderings.

"The Peruvians murdered and stole the Easter Islanders. Just before we took hold there, a gang of blackbirders from Peru went there and killed and took away many hundreds of them. They sold them to the guano diggings in the Chincha Islands. Only those escaped death or capture who hid in the dark caverns. Nearly all those taken away died soon. We then made contracts with some of those left, and took them to Tahiti to work. It is true they died, too, most of them, but some you can find where McHenry lives half a mile from here at Patutoa. We sold off the stock to Chileans, and that country owns the island now.

"I think the island had a superior race once. There are immense platforms of stone, like the *paepaes* of the Marquesas only bigger, and the stones are all fitted together without cement. They built them on promontories facing the sea. Some are three hundred feet long, and the walls thirty feet high. On these platforms there were huge stone gods that have been thrown down; some were thirty-seven feet high, and they had redstone crowns, ten feet in diameter. There were stone houses one hundred feet long, with walls five feet thick. How they moved the stones no one knows, for, of course, these people there now were not the builders. Some race of whom they knew nothing was there before them.

"They are one of the greatest mysteries in the world. Easter is the queerest of all the Maori islands. They had nothing like the other Maoris had in any of these islands, but they had plenty of stone, their lances were tipped with obsidian, and they were terrible fighters among themselves. They had no trees, and so no canoes; and they depended on driftwood and the hibiscus for weapons. They are all done for now."

Captain Benson was still busied with his log when the steamship from New Zealand arrived to take the shipwrecked men away. The *El Dorado's* boat was stowed carefully on the deck of the liner. I saw the skipper watching it as the deckhands put chocks under it and made it fast against the rolling of the ship. That boat deserved well of him, for its staunchness had stood between him and the maws of the sharks many days and nights.

I bade him and the two seamen good-by on the wharf. The

old man was full of his plan to exhibit the boat in a museum and of selling his account of his adventures to a magazine.

The crew left on Easter Island were rescued sooner than they had expected. A British tramp, the *Knight of the Garter,* put into Easter Island for emergency repairs, having broken down. The castaways left with her for Sydney, Australia, and from there reached San Francisco by the steamship *Ventura*, ten months after they had sailed away on the *El Dorado*. That schooner was never sighted again.

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT

The XIVth Congress of the International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences, September 2-8, Liege, Belgium

Symposium Title: Environmental, Geomorphological and Social Issues in Easter Island Prehistory

Christopher M. Stevenson, Symposium Chair
Virginia Department of Historic Resources

Abstract: Easter Island prehistory has been intensively investigated over the last two decades with an emphasis on archaeological inventories and the reconstruction of religious sites. However, recent research has taken on a new emphasis directed at past landscape use and its change over time. In this symposium, we present the most recent research programs and demonstrate how soil science and environmental research methods can be used to develop a context for the interpretation of the archaeological record. Studies of past agronomic potential, environmental diversity, soil structure and depositional history are used to help reconstruct the landscape that was modified by forest clearance, agricultural systems and domestic settlements.

Individual Papers, which will be published in a future issue of *Rapa Nui Journal*, include:

Soil Characteristics for Crop Growth in Historical Perspective in the La Pérouse Area of Easter Island

Geertrui Louwagie, Roger Langohr and Jari Mikkelsen
Ghent University, Laboratory of Soil Science

Abstract: Physical land evaluation methods are applied in order to test hypotheses about past land use systems on Easter Island. For a better understanding of the soilscape and its dynamics, now and in the past, the subject is studied according to the scale of observation. With regard to past agronomic potential, only small scale soil variability, of several meters up to several decametres, is further discussed. In the La Pérouse area, a pedotopotransect that crosses a lava plateau, a lava ridge and inter-lava-ridge-depression is studied. Profile 1, in plateau position, has parent rock at 1 m depth. Profile 2, situated on a concave slope, is shallow (40 cm). Profile 3, in depression position, is up to 2 m deep and has a thick (70 cm) bioturbated surface horizon and possibly a buried A horizon at about 1 m depth. The area as a whole has a considerable amount of surface stoniness. This stoniness is inversely related with the distance to rock outcrops, but is partly due to stone mulching practices. The profiles are evaluated with regard to their potential for some predominant food crops on Easter Island, such as arrowroot, banana, sugarcane, sweet potato, taro and yam.

Freshwater Aquatic Biota of Easter Island

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Abstract: Virtually all our current knowledge of the aquatic biota of Easter Island was gathered in the previous decade. An overwhelming conclusion is the extreme poverty of the assemblages. For example, there are 70 species of diatoms, 19 species of rotifers, a single cladoceran, a copepod, three ostracods and a single dragonfly. Any (sub)tropical lake with a substantial variety of aquatic environments should be home to about 250 rotifer species, so the degree of impoverishment of Easter Island's fauna is on the order of 90-95%. In *Cladocera* the situation is even worse: the single *Alona weinecki* is a subantarctic species, and has therefore almost certainly been introduced by man, with a high probability that Captain James Cook was the culprit. Likewise, a small but significant fraction of the diatoms, ostracods, the *totora,* and possibly a sponge (if the so-called spicules found are not phytoliths of *totora*) is of South-American origin and arrived simultaneously on the island, suggesting a (destructive!) contact with South-American Indians in the 14th century. Algal taxa other than diatoms have not yet been studied, but a cursory inspection of available plankton samples suggests, again, an extreme impoverishment, and the same applies to such groups as the platheminths and aquatic *Diptera (*all other groups except—probably— the protists being completely absent). Many oceanic islands partly make up for their poor biota by invasions of marine species that secondarily adapt to freshwater. A lack of true rivers has all but completely eliminated even this possibility on Easter Island. However, in few brackish coastal rock pools, at least one endemic crab and a probable endemic shrimp have been found.

New Evidence of the Schoenoplectus californicus Totora Arrival at Easter Island Based on Phytolith Analysis

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Abstract: The Easter Island vegetation shifted from a forested landscape to open grassland and incorporated new plant introductions. Among the latter was *Schoenoplectus californicus totora* (formerly *Scirpus californicus totora*), a reed widely used in South America. In 1998, an interdisciplinary study of a Rano Raraku core by Dumont and others proposed a date for its arrival on Easter Island in the second half of the 14th century. Can phytolith analysis confirm this proposed date? A comparison between the phytolith spectra from an archaeological site in the